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ER 10-1264

18 April 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Intelligence Advisory Committee

SUBJECT : Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Communications

The Problem

To define critical intelligence, which must receive especially rapid transmission to the highest authorities; to state the requirements for such intelligence in terms of the areas from which it may be anticipated, the expected volume, and the timeliness with which various types of critical intelligence must be received; and to recommend arrangements for the selection of critical intelligence and designation of relative priority for its transmission.

Conclusions

After study the Committee has concluded that:

1. Critical intelligence is defined as information indicating a situation or pertaining to a situation which affects the security or interests of the United States to such an extent that it may require the immediate attention of the President.
2. Critical intelligence cannot be assessed properly in Washington unless there is an adequate background of up-to-date related information. Special procedures for using critical intelligence will not reach maximum effectiveness, therefore, unless communications facilities generally are capable of handling a more substantial and more timely flow* of both critical and additional important but non-critical information on situations that might become critical.
3. The collector in the field must be responsible for identifying an item of critical intelligence, although it is recognized that this will always be a difficult task because he does not have the benefit of other information and analysis available in Washington. Communications must have adequate capacity, therefore, to permit the collector to err on the side of "too much" rather than "too little" in selecting items that he considers to be critical intelligence. In addition he must be furnished with up-to-date guidance concerning situations which Washington believes likely to generate critical intelligence.

* Joint Staff reservation

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9. It is important that the system for the forwarding of critical intelligence not be abused. We know from experience that in times of crisis there is a great temptation to inflate the precedence of important but non-critical intelligence in order to get the information through increasing backlogs in communications channels. This abuse of precedence increases backlogs still further and contributes to a clogging of communications. In order to prevent the development of such a situation with regard to critical intelligence provision should be made for the monitoring of the use of the critical intelligence designator and for the initiation of action to correct such abuses as may occur.

10. The Committee recognizes that the provision of adequate communications facilities and procedures will not ensure the rapid delivery of critical intelligence to policy officials, unless the time required for handling in Washington is reduced in conformity with the speed of transmission. It is essential, therefore, that the members of the IAC and the Director of NSA review their handling procedures and revise them wherever necessary to enable critical intelligence to be delivered to policy officials within the times specified above.

Recommendations

To ensure the proper initial action with regard to critical intelligence it is recommended that the Director of Central Intelligence approve the report of this Committee, sign a letter to the Secretary of Defense substantially like the draft submitted as Annex E to this paper, and upon NSC approval of plans for the communication of critical intelligence, issue a directive substantially like the draft submitted as Annex F to this paper.

WILLIAM A. TIDWELL
Chairman

Ad Hoc Committee on Communications

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